

## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

When last I wrote, I shared information about our children preparing to change classrooms and the transition from school year programs to summer camp. It seems like only yesterday, which makes it hard to believe summer is over! When I look at the colorful leaves falling to the ground and see the children wearing sweaters and jackets, however, I cannot ignore that fall is here. We're happy our friends at Head Start are back with us, and looking forward to a great school year.

I'm also happy about progress toward the goals in our strategic plan. The Board of Directors and I regularly monitor the goals and objectives to measure our successes. While much has happened, I'm particularly excited about our efforts to engage families. With the help of a Public Ally (an AmeriCorps position designed to help talented and diverse young leaders grow), we will be piloting a variety of family activities and diverse adult-learning opportunities. Not only is this a goal of our strategic plan, but Family Engagement is highlighted throughout the goals of the Delaware Early Childhood Council's strategic plan. Research has shown family engagement, more than any other factor, to have the greatest impact on a child's success in school.

I am also thrilled to share some success in fundraising. Newark Day Nursery & Children's Center has been awarded two large grants to help us make needed improvements to our facility. We have received a grant from the Energy Efficiency Investment Fund (EEIF). These dollars will be used to help replace our HVAC system with a new, energy efficient system. This will save us thousands of dollars in energy and maintenance



Back to School Night

costs. Managed by the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's Division of Energy and Climate, the EEIF helps Delaware businesses make strategic investments in capital equipment and facility upgrades that will help decrease operating costs, reduce energy consumption, and improve environmental performance. We were also awarded a grant from the Infrastructure Fund managed by Children and Families First. Funding is made possible through the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant administered by Delaware's Office of Early Learning. This grant will allow us to replace an aging structure on our playground.

As always, on behalf of all of us at Newark Day Nursery & Children's Center, I wish you health and happiness. Look for our next newsletter early in 2014!

Sincerely,

John Fisher-Klein  
Executive Director

## What's new with our Early Childhood Education Programs?

By: Bobbi Budin, Program Director

One of the greatest things about a new school year is resuming special activities. Our Pre-School and Pre-Kindergarten classes have been enjoying their Chinese Culture lessons with Ms. Tina from the Confucius Institute, a partnership with the University of Delaware. Some of the topics they have recently discussed include music, traditional clothes, numbers, geography, the Chinese flag, and the Chinese Autumn Festival. Upcoming topics include: Chinese opera, panda bears, traditional birthday celebrations, and the Chinese Dragon.

Read Aloud Delaware volunteers spend several hours per week reading to our children. The one-on-one reading time is incredibly valuable for a child's development of vocabulary and appreciation of books. Special thanks to the volunteers and staff at Read Aloud Delaware for their on-going dedication.

We really enjoy having parents/guardians join us for special activities. Back-to-School night was a success, and we look forward to more family-centered activities. Planned activities include Family Game Nights and Movie Nights. The joy on the children's faces when they get to spend time with their loved ones is spectacular. We look forward to working more closely with families as we try to add more activities. Parents/guardians, please remember the conferences are a wonderful time for you to connect with teachers and discuss your child's progress. We love your input and participation.

Speaking of special activities, we're looking forward to our annual Soup Sharing lunch. It is held at lunchtime on the Tuesday of Thanksgiving week each year. Family members sign up to bring ingredients. The children assist in the preparation of the soup (washing and chopping vegetables) and then dine with family members. It's always a fun time for all.

We're looking forward to a busy, fun-filled holiday season with lots of wonderful learning opportunities!

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Cultural dancing with the Confucius Institute

## Teaching Responsibility

By: Dane Hutchinson, SAC Coordinator

Over the years many of our families have asked me why I include a signature line for children on many of the forms (like the homework contract and Clubs form) we use in our School Age Care programs. I began doing this for several reasons. My hope is as parents/guardians read and sign the forms, they are also taking time to talk to their children about what the form says, why they are signing it, and what it means to agree by signing the paper. I also believe this is a way to begin teaching children about responsibility.

Teaching children responsibility is a difficult task, but a rewarding one. Learning responsibility can improve grades, social awareness, emotional development and confidence. Lawrence Balter, Professor of Applied Psychology at New York University, states, "Once a child has fulfilled the obligation that comes with responsibility, he or she gains a sense of satisfaction... it's these positive feelings that help motivate the child to continue taking on responsibilities in the future." Teaching children responsibility through tasks can also help children understand taking responsibility for their actions. "Kids this age have difficulty taking responsibility for their actions and behavior, especially when they think their par-

ents would disapprove of something they did," states Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, PhD, Professor of Child Development at Columbia University Teachers College in New York City. School-age children are constantly developing the understanding that rules and consequences go hand-in-hand.

The following excerpt is taken from *How to Teach Kids to Accept Responsibility for Their Actions* by Sally Marshall (Parents Magazine). I am sure many of us recognize these common "excuses" children have in order to avoid responsibility.

**"I Swear It Wasn't Me!"** Your daughter ransacks your jewelry box and even though she denies it, you're sure she did it. How do you get a kid to confess? Try a non-accusatory statement such as: "That's an interesting explanation, but I'm waiting to hear what actually happened." Then matter-of-factly go about your business. Most kids will come forward if they aren't put on the defensive. But once you get your confession, make sure you applaud her honesty -- even if there's a consequence for her deed.

**"She Made Me Do It!"** You see your son pull his sister's hair. He says she made him do it, because she hit him first. Don't play judge and jury; just make sure your child understands no matter what another kid does he's still responsible for his actions. When the heat of the moment has passed, ask your son what he thinks a good response might be the next time someone makes him angry. It's more likely to stick if he comes up with it himself. Finally, encourage empathy: "How does it feel when someone pulls your hair?"

**"It's Your Fault!"** Your daughter is running around the house, falls, and then blames you because she tripped over her always untied shoelaces. Though it's maddening to be the fall guy, don't take it personally. Just ask, "What can we do so that doesn't happen again?" Listen to her ideas and then make a suggestion of your own like, "Why don't we practice making a double knot so your shoes won't keep coming untied?" Do this often enough and she'll start looking for a solution when things go wrong -- rather than playing the blame game.

**"It Was an Accident!"** Your son knows the rule is to never touch the papers you bring home from the office, but he doodles on them anyway. When you confront him, he claims "it was an accident." Resist the temptation to yell, punish, or try to force him to admit that he did it on purpose -- none of those responses will teach him to own up to his mistakes. Instead, let him know the real consequences his doodling has for you -- and him. You might say, "Now I have to print this whole thing out again, so I won't have time to play checkers." Then ask him to help you fix the problem or keep you company as you do it so he has an opportunity to make things right. Remember, from your kid's perspective, this probably was an accident in that he didn't understand the impact of his actions. By allowing him to experience the results of his behavior, rather than feel ashamed or defensive, you'll help him learn to do the right thing.

So, how can we teach children to accept and even crave responsibility? Start out small; give your child a small task that will give confidence upon completion.



Family project at Fall Fun Fest.

- Making sure a family pet's bowl is always full of clean water.
- Putting away belongings (like coats and backpacks) correctly as soon as they get home.
- Creating and keeping track of schedules and needs for school each day.
- Letting them decide to complete tasks before or after dinner (homework, music lessons).
- Setting the table, or helping prepare a part of the meal.



- Early Childhood Education
- Before- and After-School Care
- Summer Camp at NDNCC
- Community-Based Outreach Services

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The Newark Day Nursery and Children's Center is dedicated to providing the highest quality early childhood and school age services to educate, enrich, and inspire children and youth from culturally and economically diverse families.

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## Letter from the Board of Directors

NDNCC is always looking for volunteers who are willing to serve on committees, at special events, etc. When the temperatures start to fall and leaves begin to turn colors, we also start to think about recruiting candidates to serve on our Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors are representative of the community served by NDNCC – we are parents, teachers from area schools, early education researchers, experts from banking and finance, people knowledgeable about non-profits, etc. In addition, we all have one thing in common: a strong commitment to the mission of NDNCC. We're looking for other people who are similarly committed and willing to spend some time and energy ensuring NDNCC remains an NAEYC accredited, 5-Star provider. As a board, we believe all children, no matter their fami-

ly's circumstances, deserve a top-notch early childhood and school age experience. We know, without question, NDNCC provides that experience.

Please consider joining the Board of Directors and in doing so helping NDNCC continue its efforts to provide the kind of stimulating, engaging, secure environment our children deserve. If you're interested in joining us, please email John Fisher-Klein at [jklein@newarkdaynursery.org](mailto:jklein@newarkdaynursery.org) for more information and an application.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Donofrio  
President

**Environmentally conscious?**

**Please email  
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your email address to receive future  
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